

October 22, 2012



The Honorable Adrienne J. Tissier
Chair, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
400 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

RE: Single-Use Carryout Bag Ordinance

Supervisor Tissier,

On behalf of the California Grocers Association, I write to inform you of our comfort implementing the ordinance regulating the distribution of single-use carryout bags as presented on the October 23 agenda. It is critical carryout bag regulations meet their intended environmental goals, respect consumers, and minimize impacts on retailers. We believe the ordinance as proposed meets these tests. We also strongly encourage all jurisdictions participating in the Final EIR to pursue this same ordinance in order to maximize the environmental gain and avoid competitive disadvantages for retailers.

The California Grocers Association is a non-profit, statewide trade association representing the food industry since 1898. CGA represents approximately 500 retail member companies operating over 6,000 food stores in California and Nevada, and approximately 300 grocery supplier companies. Retail membership includes chain and independent supermarkets, convenience stores and mass merchandisers. CGA members include a number of grocery companies operating in San Mateo County.

The policy of banning single-use plastic bags and allowing recyclable paper bags for a charge has shown to encourage reusable bag use, provide consumers no-cost and low-cost carryout options, and minimize operational and financial impacts to retailers. Over 60 California jurisdictions have passed this type of ordinance including all jurisdictions in Alameda and San Luis Obispo Counties, the Counties of Los Angeles, Marin and Santa Cruz, as well as the Cities of San Jose, Sunnyvale, Millbrae and San Francisco.

By banning single use plastic bags and placing a charge on single use paper bags consumers are encouraged to use reusable bags while still retaining a choice at checkout. Industry experience in California has shown within a year after ordinance implementation over 90% of consumers bring a reusable bag to the store or take no bag at all from the store.

We believe it is critical all jurisdictions participating in the Final EIR adopt the same carryout bag ordinance in order avoid a patchwork of regulation. Industry experience has shown inconsistent regulation confuses consumers and creates competitive disadvantages for retailers operating near neighboring jurisdictions, as well as for retailers with multiple store locations in different jurisdictions. With grocery companies averaging a 1% profit margin any unnecessary impact, such as a regulatory disadvantage, can have dramatic negative impacts.

Thank you for your consideration and please consider CGA a partner to encourage reusable bag use.

Sincerely,



TIMOTHY M. JAMES
Manager, Local Government Relations

cc: Members, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Mr. Dean D. Peterson PE, REHS, Director Environmental Health
Participating Municipalities in the Final Environmental Impact Report